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SUBJECT: ITALY PRESENTS ENERGY PRIORITIES FOR ITS G8  
PRESIDENCY, DISCUSSION ON MARGINS OF LONDON ENERGY  
MINISTERIAL

¶1. (SBU) On the margins of the UK-hosted December Energy Ministerial, on December 18, the Government of Italy discussed with other G8 governments its energy policy priorities for its upcoming 2009 G8 Presidency. Sergio Garriba, Advisor to the Minister of Economic Development, outlined the main themes: investments for energy security and sustainable development, energy strategies to respond to global climate change, and a program of action to address energy poverty, with a focus on Africa. Several delegations, including the U.S. and Japan, raised questions about the breadth of these themes, and urged a more narrow focus. Italy will host the G8 Ministerial on May 24-25 in Rome. End Summary

¶2. (SBU) The GOI envisions three separate sessions. The first will look at investments for energy security and sustainable development, and will include a discussion of the international energy markets and the effects of the economic crisis. This session will include discussion of how to promote energy investments, and the role of the energy producers and consumers dialogue. Jonathan Shrier, Acting Assistant Secretary, Department of Energy, questioned how this discussion will dovetail with the work being undertaken by the International Energy Forum, and whether the GOI intends to build upon the discussion that was anticipated for the December 19, UK-hosted ministerial. Garriba replied that the focus of the Italian meeting would be consistent with both.

¶3. (SBU) The second session would be a discussion of energy strategies to respond to global climate change, including the harmonization of national energy policies toward greenhouse gas reduction, the role of energy efficiency and technology innovation, and government-industry participation. Several delegations argued that the May Energy Ministerial did not become a climate change meeting, especially since climate change would likely loom large on the agenda of G8 environment ministers. The GOI responded that such work would need to be coordinated with environment ministries, noting that there would be a joint preparatory meeting in the early spring for both ministerials. Several delegations urged a focus on clean energy technology.

¶4. (SBU) The third session would be devoted to addressing energy poverty, with a specific emphasis on Africa, and would include discussion of energy access for economic development, energy networks and market integration in Africa, and

investment in the sub-Saharan region. Several meeting participants, including Japan and the UK, questioned whether the G8 was the proper mechanism for discussion of such a theme, especially if the GOI were to push for a defined program of action. International Financial Institutions were better positioned to address this work area, said Yasuo Tanabe, Deputy Director General, Economic Affairs Bureau, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Japan.

¶5. (SBU) In addition to the G8 governments, the GOI also is considering whether to expand the meeting to include the International Energy Agency, OPEC, the World Bank, and selected countries, including China, South Africa, Brazil and India. The Japanese strongly advocated for the inclusion of South Korea if an expanded meeting were to be held. The U.S. and UK delegations cautioned about expanding too broadly the meeting, which would both undermine the G8 process and make consensus more difficult to achieve. Questions were also raised about the participation of African energy ministers, who might have less interest in the first two proposed topics for the ministerial and who might come expecting some new aid program. Italy said it was thinking of including Nigeria and Algeria, along with South Africa. Garriba stated that the next preparatory meeting would remain limited to G8 governments, pending a consensus on whom else to include in the ministerial.

¶6. (U) DOE cleared this cable on January 22.

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